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ABSTRACT

A study compared perceptions about male and female managers who used either an authoritative or participative leadership style. Participants were 102 undergraduate students from a small midwestern college, aged 17 to 60 with a mean age of 22 years. They evaluated a manager after reading a description of the behavior of a division manager in an organization. Students rated the manager's overall leadership ability and expected degree of success on 9-point scales; rated the manager on 10 bipolar personality characteristics, using a 7-point scale for each; and indicated whether they would like to work for the manager. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) revealed a significant interaction of manager gender and leadership style on the ratings on 10 personality characteristics. Males were rated more positively when they were authoritative; females were rated more positively when they were participative. Chi squares indicated that fewer students thought they would like or like to work for the woman rather than for the man. More students said they would not want to work for the authoritative woman than any of the other managers. Results indicated leaders were viewed more positively when they used a leadership style that was typical of and consistent with their gender. The liking measures also indicated a lingering negative feeling about women managers. (Appendixes include 17 references and 3 tables.) (Author/YLB)

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Perceptions of Managers: Effects of Leadership Style and Gender

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Abstract

The effects of leadership style and gender on perceptions about managers was investigated in a 2 X 2 experiment. Participative and authoritative leadership styles were compared because, there is a gender difference in their use (Eagly and Johnson 1990). Undergraduate students evaluated a manager after reading a description of the manager's behavior. A MANOVA revealed a significant interaction of manager gender and leadership style on the ratings on 10 personality characteristics. Males were rated more positively when they were authoritative; while, females were rated more positively when they were participative. Chi squares indicated that fewer students thought they would like or like to work for the woman than the man. More people said they would not want to work for the authoritative woman than any of the other managers. The results indicate that leaders are viewed more positively when they use a leadership style that is typical of and consistent with their gender. The liking measures also indicate a lingering negative feeling about women managers.

Perceptions of Managers: Effects of Leadership Style and Gender

The discrepancy between the movement of women into the workforce and their movement into management has raised many questions. One issue that has been raised is the extent to which gender stereotyped perceptions influence the perceptions of women and men as managers. A second issue is the extent to which men and women display different leadership styles. This research investigates the extent to which leadership styles and gender stereotypes interact in influencing perceptions of managers.

Gender stereotypes influence expectations of management ability and the evaluation of management behavior. The more a behavior violates the stereotyped expectations, the more negative the evaluation of the individual (Haccoun, Haccoun & Sallay, 1978; Wiley & Eskilson 1982). The characteristics associated with a successful manager have been shown to be more similar to the stereotype of men than of women (Brenner, Tomkiewicz & Schein, 1989; Heilman, Block, Martell, & Simon, 1989; Schein 1973, 1975). Male managers' descriptions of women managers and successful women managers come closer to their descriptions of successful managers, but they still do not attribute equal leadership ability to them (Heilman, et. al., 1989). Although leadership is often characterized as masculine, leadership styles differ in the degree to which they utilize masculine or feminine characteristics. Men who are high in initiating structure, a masculine style, receive more positive evaluations; while women who are high in consideration, a feminine

style, receive more positive evaluations (Bartof & Butterfield 1976; Petty & Lee, 1975). Similarly, male and female managers are viewed more positively when they use power strategies that are consistent with gender expectations (Wiley & Eskilson 1982). Harccoun, Haccoun and Sallay (1978) found women were rated as less effective than men when they used a directive authoritarian style. However, Kushell and Newton (1986) found that measures of subordinate satisfaction were not affected by gender of leaders who used autocratic or democratic styles.

Research on the existence of gender differences in leadership style has led to conflicting conclusions. One view is that women in higher organizational positions may be shaped to be more like men (Fagenson, 1986). This view is consistent with the results of Dobbins and Platz's (1986) a meta-analysis which found no gender differences in leadership style on the dimensions of initiating structure and consideration. Eagly and Johnson's (1990) more recent meta-analysis supports these conclusions for the leadership dimensions included in Dobbins and Platz's study; however, they found consistent gender differences in the use of democratic and autocratic styles. Females are more democratic and participative than males in organizational as well as laboratory studies of leadership. Support for this was found in Rosener's (1990) survey of successful managers when women managers described themselves as more participative than their male counterparts.

The previous research suggests that the gender of the manager can interact with leadership style to influence perceptions of the leader. However, few studies have investigated this interaction in relationship

to participative and authoritative styles. Since men and women display the greatest differences on these dimensions of leadership, more research on them is needed (Eagly and Johnson, 1990; Rosener, 1990). Also, the participative style is currently being encouraged as a part of management trends which stress quality and excellence (Peters & Waterman, 1982), making it important to discover perceptions about this leadership style for both genders. This study compares perceptions about male and female managers who use either an authoritative or participative leadership style. Both men and women are expected to be viewed more favorably when they use the style that is gender consistent. It is expected that men will be evaluated more positively than women when they use the authoritative style. However, it is not expected that women will be evaluated more positively than men when they use the participative style. While Lee and Alvarez (1977) found that men were rated more negatively than women when they used high consideration; research on communication styles suggests that women's styles are sometimes devalued and may reflect more negatively on women who use them than on men (Bradley, 1981).

Method

Subjects

The participants in the study were 102 undergraduate students from a small midwestern college. Their ages ranged from 17 to 60; the mean was 22. A majority (60.4%) of the students were currently employed; 52% reported that they had held a leadership position. The students reported an average of 3.5 years of work experience.

Procedure

The study was presented to the students during class. The students were asked to give their impressions after reading a paragraph about a division manager in an organization. The manager's gender and the description of the leadership style were manipulated within the paragraph. The manager's gender was varied by referring to the manager as either Lois or Larry Morton. The leadership style was manipulated by the description of the approach the manager typically used to make changes in the division; the approaches were based on Likert's (1979) description of participative and benevolent authoritative styles. The participative style included meeting with the staff for open discussions, debates on the proposals and making decisions by consensus. The authoritative style included meeting with the staff to describe the change decisions and to answer questions.

Students rated the manager's overall leadership ability and expected degree of success on 9-point scales. They then rated the manager on 10 bipolar personality characteristics, using a 7-point scale for each. Finally, the students indicated whether or not they thought they would like the manager and would like to work for the manager. Five response categories were given for these questions: definitely yes, probably yes, don't know, probably no, and definitely no.

Prior to analysis the coding was reversed on some scales so that the positive characteristics would receive the highest rating on all scales.

Results

The ratings on the 10 personality characteristics were used as the

dependent variables in a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with manager gender and leadership style as the independent variables. The multivariate effect was significant for the interaction on manager gender and leadership style, F (10,87) = 2.14, $p < .05$. Four of the characteristics had significant univariate interactions: knowledgeable, F (1,96) = 4.62, $p < .05$; confident, F (1,96) = 9.29, $p < .01$; intelligent F (1,96) = 4.19, $p < .05$; and sincere F (1,96) = 6.14, $p < .05$. As indicated in Table 1, the male manager was rated more positively on each of these characteristics when he used the authoritative style than when he used the participative style; however, simple effects analyses indicated that the differences were significant only for knowledgeable and confident. The female manager was rated more positively when she used the participative style, but the difference was significant only for sincere. The interaction of manager gender and leadership style for ratings of intelligence was due to authoritative male managers being rated as more intelligent than authoritative female managers.

There was also a significant multivariate effect for leadership style, F (10,87) = 2.39, $p < .05$. There were significant main effects for leadership style for decisive, F (1,96) = 8.01, $p < .01$, and powerful, F (1,96) = 4.13, $p < .05$. Authoritative managers were seen as more decisive (M = 5.94) and powerful (M = 5.52) than participative managers (decisive M = 5.21 and powerful M = 4.96).

The ratings of leadership ability and success were dependent variables in a second MANOVA. There were no significant effects of

manager gender and leadership style on these measures.

Chi-squares were used to analyze the liking and liking to work for the manager responses. Due to the small number of negative responses the don't know and the two no categories were combined for the analyses. There was a significant effect of manager gender on liking and liking to work for the manager, $X^2(2) = 10.19$, $p < .01$ and $X^2(2) = 12.61$, $p < .01$ respectively. Respondents were more likely to say they would not like and would not like to work for the female manager than the male manager (Table 2). There was also a significant effect of leadership style on liking the manager $X^2 = 6.34$, $p < .05$. This effect was the result of more respondents indicating they definitely would like the manager when the manager was participative (26.0%) than when the manager was authoritative (7.7%). Separate analyses were performed to test the effect of leadership style on liking and liking to work for each gender of managers. The only significant effect of leadership style was for liking to work for a woman manager, $X^2(2) = 8.36$, $p < .05$. More respondents said they would not like to work for an authoritative than a participative woman manager (Table 3). The effect of manager gender on liking to work for the manager was also significant for the authoritative style, $X^2 = 12.91$, $p < .01$, but not for the participative style. More of the respondents indicated that they would not like to work for the authoritative woman (44.4%) than the authoritative man (4.0%).

Discussion

The results support the hypothesis that leaders of each gender are

viewed more positively when they use a leadership style that is more typical of and consistent with their gender. Women were viewed as more sincere when they used the participative style than when they used the authoritative style. If perceptions of insincerity lead others to thinking they are putting on an act, women who use the authoritative style may not be taken seriously. Men were seen as more knowledgeable and competent when they used the authoritative style than when they used the participative style. These results suggest that, due to possible concern over damaging their image, male managers might find it difficult to adopt the participative leadership style being urged in current management trends (Peters & Waterman, 1982). In organizations making a transition to a quality emphasis men could experience conflict between pressures to adopt a new style and the threat of being seen as less competent.

The perceptions of liking the manager and liking to work for the manager reflect the traditional negative views of women as managers. Despite depiction of the same management behaviors, fewer respondents thought they would like or like to work for the woman manager than the man manager. There still appears to be a chilly climate for women in management. Consistent with the hypothesis that gender consistent styles would lead to more positive evaluations, the participative woman manager was liked better than the authoritative woman manager. However the hypothesis was not supported for the male managers; their leadership style did not significantly influence liking.

The hypothesis that women would be evaluated more negatively than

men when they both used an authoritative style was supported. The authoritative man was seen as more intelligent than the authoritative woman. Also, the respondents were less likely to think they would like to work for the authoritative woman than for an authoritative man. However, there were no differences in the evaluations of women and men when they both used the participative style.

These results suggest biases in the evaluation of managers that could result in discrimination influencing promotions to higher management positions. However, they should be considered as tentative due to the nature of the sample; the results need to be replicated using managers who have experience in hiring and promotion evaluation. Dobbins and Platz (1986) suggested that gender stereotypes do not effect the evaluation of current leaders in organizations, but do effect evaluation in situations where there is limited information available. It is likely that immediate supervisors and subordinates have enough information on leaders to override their gender biases. However, decisions to hire or promote into leadership may often be made by people who have less immediate experience with the individual and who then may be more affected by their stereotypes.

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Table 1

Mean Ratings for the 10 Personality Characteristics

Characteristic	Male Manager		Female Manager	
	Authoritative	Participative	Authoritative	Participative
Knowledgeable-Not knowledgeable*	5.92	5.25	5.55	5.83
Confident-Lacks confidence*	5.88	4.66	5.11	5.91
Intelligent-Unintelligent*	6.00	5.50	5.25	5.91
Sincere-Insincere*	6.08	5.62	5.22	6.00
Decisive-Indecisive	6.08	4.83	5.81	5.58
Supportive-Hostile	5.92	5.66	5.33	6.04
Experienced-Inexperienced	6.00	5.25	5.40	5.45
Powerful-Powerless	5.84	4.91	5.22	5.00
Strong-Weak	5.88	5.41	5.48	5.41
Warm-Cold	5.16	5.37	4.92	5.25

* univariate interaction significant $p < .05$

Table 2

Percentage of Respondents Indicating Liking for Managers

	Male Manager		Female Manager	
	Like	Like to work for	Like	Like to work for
Definitely Yes	14.3	24.5	18.9	28.3
Probably Yes	79.6	71.4	52.8	43.4
Don't know & No	6.1	4.1	28.3	28.3

Table 3

Percentage of Respondent Indicating Liking to Work for Managers

	Male Manager		Female Manager	
	Authoritative	Participative	Authoritative	Participative
Definitely Yes	20.0	29.2	22.2	33.3
Probably Yes	76.0	66.7	33.3	58.3
Don't know & No	4.0	4.2	44.4	8.3